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**Mediatization of political negotiations in modern democracies:
institutional characteristics matter¹**

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Contents

Problem and objectives	3
Media and political institutions.....	4
Differentiation of political institutions	5
Logics of negotiating institutions in relation to media logics	6
Characteristics, structures and procedures of negotiating institutions	7
Case studies.....	9
Conclave	10
Federal Council of Switzerland.....	11
Conference Committee	12
Exploratory talks following the elections for the German Bundestag	13
Conclusions from the case studies.....	14
Discussion	16
References	18

Problem and objectives

This paper focuses on the transformation of political institutions in democracies, in which mass media are assigned to have great impact on social structures. The process of exerting influence by mass media on nearly every social sphere, which is described as "mediatization", takes the centre stage of this paper⁴. Mediatization in this context means the implementation of mass media logic within political processes (cp. Marcinkowski, 2005). The term media logic refers to patterns of producing and steering attention, such as personalization, negativity, conflict orientation. It is assumed that this development leads to a depolitization of anciently political matters (cp. Kaase, 1998; Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999; Schulz, 2004). Depolitization expresses itself in a specific self-dramatization and external dramatization of political institutions, whereas media logic becomes the central parameter for every form of public presentation. This becomes manifest both in a specific form of presentation in media coverage, what results in a simplifying description because of media routines, and in modes of adaptation in political institutions themselves, which are concerned with their continuous self-dramatization.

In general, the term "mediatization" in contemporary mass communication research is linked with a wide range of partially clouded, inexplicit, and highly normative presumptions, and implies deep impacts on entire societies or political systems. One of the most prevalent assumptions linked to this context is the assumption of media democracy or even "mediocracy" as a result of mediatization of politics. The discussion about "media democracy" is by no means a new one and resumes a prior debate on modern publicity process, which focuses on the corroding impact of old and new media on political institutions and behaviours in a set of political contexts (Mazzoleni, 1998: 103 referring to Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995). Existing research often assume, that media democracy and the increasing impact of media on public affairs must be convicted. Mostly, media are seen as a perturbation of the political process and a hindrance for political decision making. It is a commonly shared perception that mass media dominates, even colonizes, the political system, and along with it its central players - political institutions. They undergo an adaptation process, which turns them into followers of media logic instead of institutional logic. Therefore most scholars think of mediatization only from the perspective that media dominate – or even worse: determine - politics. In sum: Media influence in this perspective is seen as a dysfunctional influence on the political process and its institutions, which endangers democracy as such. In opposition to this point of view, we assume that effects of mediatization could be both dysfunctional and functional. It depends fundamentally on the characteristics of the institutions which get mediatized.

Empirical findings of media impact on political structures exist up to now rather in research studies of media impact on parties or parliaments (cp. Marschall, 2001; Mughan, 2000) and – first of all - on election campaigns. Existing empirical studies often concentrate on election campaigns ending with the conclusion, that election campaigns are increasingly mediatized. But – this conclusion is no sufficient proof for the concept of mediatization (Marcinkowski, 2005: 344). Whatever else if not election campaigns should be mediatized? Election

⁴ Therefore we use the term mediatization in a restricted meaning and explicitly for the evasive influence of traditional mass media such as newspapers, magazines, TV, or radio. Most of our assumptions can be applied also for the World Wide Web, but this needs special examination, so that we focus on the traditional mass media.

campaigns depend fundamentally on their publicity. If mass media are the most important channel to reach the public in modern democracies, it is quite obvious that especially election campaigns would be highly influenced by mass media. Verification of the mediatization concept needs stronger and more evidences - also in a comparative perspective.

For this reason, in this paper we look at the role of institutional structures and ask for their moderating effects regarding the probability for changes in political structures by mediatization. Empirical studies so far neglect the question, what aspects moderate mediatization effects. Further, empirical evidences lack on studies about mediatization of other political institutions than elections, parties or parliaments. Also, there is a strong need for more comparative research. The paper tries to fill in the blanks and focuses on the investigation of moderating variables of mediatization effects with respect to characteristics of political institutions. We focus on political negotiating institutions, assuming that this is a "hard" test for both the transferability of the theorem of mediatization on other objects of investigation as well as its expressiveness for the explanation of societal changes.. The paper presents parts of a comprehensive research project⁵ that analyzes both preconditions of mediatization (with respect to characteristics of political institutions and characteristics of media systems), as well as resulting mediatization effects on the rules and functionality of institutions regarding negotiating institutions.

Against the background of the concept of mediatization this paper discusses actual observations of the likeliness of mediatization effects on examples from the US, Switzerland, Germany and the Vatican. Aim of this paper is to reveal the relevance of the specific institutional order. We argue that institutional structures moderate mediatization effects.

Media and political institutions

There are doubts on the idea of the utter determination of media logics in political institutions. More convincing from this perspective is the idea of a co-existence of various logics that might function as orientation system for politics (Marcinkowski, 2005: 346). Whether this additional media logic is the cause for mediatization effects of political institutions and to what extend that might be the case depends on two aspects mainly. First, the type of political institution and second the relation between their logic and media logic (Marcinkowski, 2005: 346 et seq.). Thus mediatization effects may vary from one political institution to another. Before we can analyze mediatization processes of politics we thus have to:

- differentiate political institutions firstly,
- examine their specific logics in relation to media logics secondly and

⁵ The Project "The dynamics of political institutions in mediated democracies: Political bargaining and the transformation of the public sphere" is led by Frank Marcinkowski and part of the "National Centre of Competence in Research: Challenges to Democracy in the 21st Century", funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (For details refer to: <http://www.nccr-democracy.unizh.ch>).

- analyze the likeliness of mediatization effects for the objects of investigation thirdly.

Differentiation of political institutions

Whereas traditional institutional theory in political science and historical-descriptive studies of governmental systems tended to devote their attention to describing formal institutions, especially constitutional arrangements, today this type of descriptive analysis is generally considered inadequate (March & Olsen, 1984; Olson, 1991; Czada, 1995). Formal policy-making is supplemented in important ways through informal governance in institutionalized contexts in which a multiplicity of public and private actors interact (Windhoff-Héritier, 1980; Scharpf, 2000). Those changes in the structure of political rulings are concomitant phenomena of structural changes in modern societies in general (Mayntz, 1993: 41).

This increasingly complex system of political regulation has recently been labelled “governance” (Kooiman, 2003; Benz 2004). In order to capture this complexity, we need a concept of institutions that draws on the “new state architecture” (Grande, 1993) and recognizes the relative autonomy of institutional arrangements without simplifying their influence on political outcomes as determinative. The most promising alternative is March and Olsen’s (1987; 1989) new institutionalism, which Czada (1995: 211) credits with having “‘rediscovered’ the logic of institutionally structured behavior [...] and recognizing the significance of institutional arrangements, in particular in the way they constitute political actors by allocating functions, status, resources, and orientations.” This new preoccupation with institutions has also highlighted the way that institutions shape ordering principles and thus perceptions and rationalities, including willingness to accept the authority of political institutions (Rehberg, 1995).

We draw on the “new institutionalist” definition of political institutions. In that sense institutions are conceived as relatively permanent systems of rules that organize the framework of behavior for individual and collective actors and determine the range of actions available to those actors. Complex democratic systems are characterized by the coexistence of numerous such systems of rules, each organized by a distinct logic. These rule systems qualify as political to the extent that they serve the production and distribution of public goods (Czada, 1995: 205).

Following this definition, a variety of different political institutions can be distinguished. Recent research focuses on the consensus model of democracy after a long period of claiming the Westminster Model of majoritarian democracy as ideal conception. Lijphart, who elaborated this concept using the Dutch case, was able to demonstrate up to the mid-1980s that this method of resolving political conflicts is manifested much more widely among West European democracies than commonly believed (Lijphart, 1977; 1984). Lehmbruch’s foundational study (“Party Competition in the Federal State”, 2000, initially 1976) was the first to point out competitive and negotiated democratic elements in the (West) German political system. Together with the literature on corporatism, which highlighted the significance of neo-corporatist bargaining processes (Lehmbruch & Schmitter, 1982), as well as observations of the bargaining patterns of administrative agencies (Benz 1998), consensus democracy research eventually produced the concepts of negotiation democracy and of

institutionalized negotiating systems (Mayntz, 1993). This term refers to rule systems that have partially withdrawn controversial policy issues out of the realm of party competition and majority rule, in favor of arrangements that favor amicable settlements among leading political actors (Grande, 2004).

Logics of negotiating institutions in relation to media logics

Following Benz, modern democracies have to deal with deficits concerning the efficacy of problem solving. Negotiating systems are required to ensure efficacy of those processes (Benz, 1998: 204). Due to the obviously huge relevance of negotiating systems in 21st century democracies, our paper focuses on the possibilities and limits of mediatization effects in negotiating institutions. These are dependent not only on the type of political institutions - negotiating systems in that case - but on the relation between their logic and media logic also (Marcinkowski, 2005: 346et seq.). This is what we will focus at in the following paragraph.

The internal logic of bargaining institutions is not determined purely by interests and resources, but also by specific features of the mode of communication. Key characteristics of bargaining have been described by Jon Elster (1989: 50 et seq.; 1991; 1995), who defines bargaining as a decision-oriented form of communication that aims to achieve a compromise between divergent interests. Bargaining actors represent specific interests and strategically employ threats, warnings, and promises during the negotiation process, which should be backed up by material capacities and resources. The participants' bargaining position depends on the credibility of their threats and promises, which can be reinforced or undermined by media communication. Successful negotiations result in the partial consideration of all participating interests in the form of an amicable compromise. Political bargains are generally highly specialized, involve a limited number of actors, and are subject to strict time constraints. Elster and others have pointed out that a decisive prerequisite of successful negotiation is the exclusion of the public from the bargaining process (Lehmbruch, 2000: 26). This atmosphere of privacy provides participants with the opportunity to demonstrate willingness to compromise without losing their credibility as loyal representatives of their respective interests. Threats and promises are more credible in this context, since they can't be relativized in public or be denied when they don't become public in the first place. Positions and arguments can be flexibly deployed and withdrawn when actors don't have to worry about losing face in public. Negotiated agreements require careful re-phrasing once they are made public, with successes characterized as a collective achievement and individual contributions suppressed. Finally, a successful negotiation is only possible when each participant can walk away with something to display to his clientele and to the public at large as evidence that he "won" the negotiation. Both are only possible when the intimacy of negotiations can be preserved. Under the conditions of media driven democracy and media logic, these prerequisites of negotiated democratic decision-making are increasingly difficult to realize.

The term media logic refers to regular media patterns of producing and steering attention. The mass media claim the right to total transparency and publicity of political processes and tend to be provoked when confronted with closed doors. Furthermore, the media's tendency

to personalize the political process leads to an emphasis on conflict and failure, and policymaking becomes framed as a contest with a winner and a loser (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995; Negrine, 1996; Brants & Sinue, 1998, Hallin & Mancini, 2003). Table 1 contrasts the logic of negotiations and media logic (Marcinkowski, 2005: 352).

Logic of negotiations	Media Logic
Privacy	Transparency, Publicity
Compromises	Conflicts
Collective decisions	Interest in specific persons
Interest in winner	Interest in loser

Table 1: logic of negotiations in contrast to media logic

In order to attract the media's attention, political actors have to adapt to this personalized, conflict-oriented frame (Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999), at which point they become unwitting accomplices in the hollowing out of the preconditions of negotiation democracy. These observations have led several authors (Grande, 2000; 2004; Marcinkowski, 2002; Häusermann et al. 2004) to conclude that West European democracies are confronted with a new structural contradiction that arises from the combination of negotiated and media democracy. They argue that political bargaining and media publicity are based on fundamentally incompatible rule systems, to the point that they risk mutual obstruction. Grande (2004) illustrated this theory with the contradictory expectations placed on political elites and has identified a "strategic trilemma" in German politics, according to which the irreconcilable conditions of party competition, the need to negotiate, and the power of the new media logic threaten the future of democracy in the media society. The relation between the logic of negotiating institutions and media logic is what he considers as the most problematic one, since their rule systems are totally incompatible (Grande, 2004). So in negotiating systems we find ideal preconditions to analyze possibilities and assumable limits of mediatization effects. Since there is a broad variety of negotiating institutions, those possibilities and limits might be different depending on the characteristics of the particular institution.

Characteristics, structures and procedures of negotiating institutions

The process of mediatization of political institutions is characterized by the orientation on rules of media logic, such as the quest for public attention, the focus on certain actors and the differentiation between winners and losers. We argue that possibilities and limits of mediatization effects depend on the structures, procedures and other characteristics of

political institutions. Hence we now focus on the characteristics and structures of negotiating institutions.

Following Scharpf (2000) and Czada (2000) three types of negotiating institutions can be compared regarding the institutional parameters:

- constitutional coercive forms,
- institutional stimulated forms,
- politically demanded forms of cooperation.

We choose four institutions to exemplary analyze characteristics, structures and procedures of negotiating systems. The selected cases shall include all three above mentioned forms of negotiating institution. Further, for not only focusing on the comparison of different institutions but also integrating a comparative perspective regarding national differences, we choose institutions from different nations: Switzerland, Germany and Unites States of America. Switzerland represents the consensus democracy, Germany has combinations of majoritarian and consensus elements, United States are more of a majoritarian type of democracy. Our most exotic case study focuses on the Vatican as the most different case in this little overview of different negotiating institutions. We use it as contrast to the other cases.

The Swiss Federal Council ("Bundesrat") is the executive organ in Switzerland. It is a constitutional coercive form. After the elections for the German Bundestag 2005, which didn't generate a clear result for forming of government, there have been some exploratory talks between the two biggest parties ("exploratory talks"). We consider them as an informal negotiating institution, which can be classified as a political demanded form of cooperation. Because of the need for negotiating conference committees in the parliament of the US only in cases, when the whole chambers fail in their negotiations, we classify U.S. conference committees as institutional stimulated. Furthermore we want to look at the Conclave in the Vatican as an example of a very low likeliness of media logic implementation in negotiating institutions.

	Switzerland	Germany	US	Vatican
Institution	Federal Council	Exploratory talks	Conference committees	Conclave
Type	constitutional coercive form	politically demanded form of cooperation	institutional stimulated form	constitutional coercive form

Table 2: Sample of negotiating institutions

Basing on these considerations we assume that there is a variety of characteristics that moderate the degree of mediatization effects for negotiating systems. Our assumptions relate to the following criteria, which are listed in table 3.

dimensions	influencing factors
institutional structure	Level of Formalization
	Level of public openness, transparency
decisional process	Orientations of bargaining (Mayntz 1993) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • compromises concerning different interests// balancing of interests • problem solving • problems of distribution (of public goods/resources)
	Necessity of public acceptance (legitimacy)
	Binding character
involved actors	Exit-option (alternative options of problem solving) actors
	Homogeneity of actors and number of actors
Modus operandi	Frequency of meetings

Table 3: Characteristics, structures and procedures of negotiating institutions

In order not to go beyond the scope of this paper, we will confine our further argumentation to the dimensions "institutional structure" and "involved actors". We draw four assumptions regarding the likeliness of mediatization effects in negotiating systems. The independent variable mediatization effects is operationalized as the implementation of aspects of media logic as summarized in table 1 in the political behaviour of institutional actors.

1. Informal networks, e.g. politically demanded form of cooperation, are more vulnerable than formal negotiating institutions, especially as forms of constitutional coercive negotiation.
2. The more negotiating institutions are open for the public the more likely are mediatization effects.
3. If there are exit options for actors, what means that there are alternative options for problem-solving than negotiating, the likeliness for mediatization effects is higher than without exit options.
4. The more homogeneous the actors are and the smaller their number is, the less likely are mediatization effects.

Case studies

The following case studies are considered as examples for the possibilities as well as the limitations of mediatization effects in negotiating institutions. Mediatization effects depend deeply on the structures, processes, and characteristics of the object of mediatization effects. The chosen case studies reveal different types of institutions with a different national and therefore historic and cultural background. After describing the characteristics of each institution, we will discuss their potential of implementing media logics based along the criteria in table 2 and examine the above formulated assumptions.

Conclave

It is appropriate to look at the Conclave as the negotiating institution with the mandate of electing popes not only because of latest incidences. The Conclave is especially suited as object of investigation because of its nearly unchanged procedures and structures for hundreds of years. In addition, the Conclave is an interesting object of investigation because of the public attention and therefore media attention it always gains when it convenes. If mediatization is really a fundamental social process, which alters pre-modern institutions, we should be able to discover indices for it even in the case of the Conclave. We consider the Conclave in this context as a quasi-democratic negotiating institution because of its election procedure, and therefore as a "forerunner model" of modern negotiating institutions.

Since late 13th century in case of the Conclave (from the Latin *com clave*, "with keys"; cp. Colomer & McLean, 1998: 12) the public is seen as an influence which endangers electoral freedom. So the most striking characteristic of the Conclave is certainly its complete walling-off from public, what is reflected also in the locking and the technical investigation of the rooms, in which the cardinals convene. At the beginning of the Conclave the elective cardinals have to swear an oath to absolute secrecy about the election of the new pope (cp. *Universi Dominici Gregis*, cap. II, 48). After lengthy discussion the cardinals elect secretly a new pope according to the qualified-majority-rule. Against this background it is all the more surprising that a few months after Benedict's XVI election in 2005 an anonymous cardinal tells media in detail about the several ballots in the Conclave. Is this indiscretion an indication for mediatization of even a Vatican institution?

According to the postulated criteria and influencing factors above, we argue that this indiscretion is indeed a reflex on immense media attention for the new pope, though it does not suit as an indicator for mediatization. It is profoundly unlike, that this enormous media attention will lead to an institutional change of the Conclave – neither in its procedures nor in its information policy. The Conclave seen as a negotiating institution must be regarded as an institution with the highest grade of formalization. The self-conception of the Conclave is founded on the belief, that the standing orders are based on God's will, which is enunciated through His "deputies" on earth. Adjustments on modern mass media are restricted to adjustments in technical regards, e.g. the searching of the Conclave's rooms towards microphones or similar. It is assumed, that the latest incidents, regarding the Conclave as well as the pope's election in general, are no new phenomena of an increased mass media power. They are the modern form of expression of a general interest in the institution "pope" itself, which can be found decades before. Furthermore, going public is no real option for the supporters of potential candidates. It is more than unlikely that the bigger part of the elective candidates, who comes from all over the world, would be influenced by the coverage of a regional newspaper or a national TV program.

In sum, the example Conclave shows that media attention is a necessary but no sufficient condition for the probability of an institution's mediatization. If the institution possesses strong factors of persistence, such as its level of formalization or its long history, implementations of media logic are less likely. Besides, in this context, another interesting question is, whether the telegenic potential of the different candidates influences the substance of negotiations.

Federal Council of Switzerland

For the Swiss government, the Swiss Federal Council, it is widely discussed, if an ending of the specific Swiss principle of collegiality is probable. The Swiss Federal Council has seven members, which are elected from parliament without special assignments. Afterwards every member takes one of seven departments. In principle, the members of the federal council are coequal; they handle their duties and responsibilities conjointly and absolutely autonomous from their respective party. This system knows no head of government, what is often justified that this fact “mirrors the cultural founded aversion to dominating positions of power of individuals” (Linder, 1999: 223). But, politicians as well as journalists have discussed this principle's change for decades, both as an already existing fact as well as a probable possibility. Another characteristic of Swiss government is its party political formation, which is defined by the so called "Zauberformel" (magic formula) since 1959. The magic formula determines which party sends how many members in the federal council. In 2003 the longstanding structure was modified in favor of the right-wing catch-all party, “SVP”, which obtained a second seat. Since then, inside this board a trend of party-political polarization has been strengthened, which has emerged for the past ten years.

The increasing polarization inside the federal council attacks the principle of collegiality, what is discussed both in every political party and in media coverage. Core argument in this discussion is the increasing number of indiscretions from the direction of the federal council. In principle, the council's meetings are non-public. Members do not talk about internal bargaining processes; the board presents its decisions to public as collective. Everything what is known about negotiation processes inside the council results from such indiscretions (cp. Linder, 1999: 224). The possibility to use media public as an instrument for pressure in formally discrete negotiations increases the probability that single actors act party-orientated instead of polity-orientated. Thus, the function of negotiation institutions is limited in the extent as going (media) public becomes a legitimate strategic option for involved actors, because they use the public sphere as an alternative venue for problem-solving. This becomes a probable pattern and acceptable exit-option for political actors, if absolute transparency is demanded by public – as it is the case in the Swiss media arena. The established patterns of media coverage produce a media image of the federal council, which is conflict-orientated and de-politicising (focuses on conflicts between members and not on political matters).

These developments must be seen as novelty in Swiss politics, because indiscretions come lately ascribable from single council members, who place them in media interviews or public speeches.⁶ So, actual incidents become indications for a development, which is also seen in other political systems: The communicative reduction of complex structures and processes to one single member of a cooperative institution, who is framed by media as a go-getter and

⁶ A quantitative content analysis by the authors of this paper of 129 articles, which focus on the principle of collegiality and were published during the time period from January, 1st, 1997 to June, 6th, 2005 in the Swiss national newspapers „Tages-Anzeiger“, „Neue Zürcher Zeitung“, „Sonntagszeitung“ and „NZZ am Sonntag“ (from June 2002 on), confirmed the increase of media coverage in general as well as the increase of articles that referred to actions of members from the council that are adverse to the principle of collegiality from September, 2003 on (in December 2003 Blocher was elected to the Swiss Federal Council).

who features as problem-solver and common sense-person. This person – actually Christoph Blocher, a SVP member of the Swiss Federal Council, - has to fail necessarily on these high expectations, because this way of presentation objects fundamentally the principle of consent and collegiality in the Federal Council, which is founded on the principle of equality of all members. This is an example for deliberative democracy which gets under pressure of media democracy, what could lead to a limited function of negotiating institutions.

But, what means this for the Federal Council's likeliness of getting mediatized? We assume that this probability is relatively low - besides mediatization through personalization effects as presented above. But as long as going public is a rare exit option of the council's members, increasing influence of mass media cannot be expected. Though media attention for the Swiss Federal Council is definitely high because of the binding character of its decisions, media impact in the dimension of polity is constricted. This assumption bases above all on the level of formalization. Every change or reform of its procedures, membership, or mission needs a high deliberative and bureaucratic effort, and it needs a direct democratic order from the Swiss people. For this reason, the general potential for changes of the Federal Council is limited to ways of incremental shifts.

Conference Committee

Conference committees are negotiating institutions: Conferees from both Congress chambers, the Senate and the House of Representatives, try to resolve differences between the two chambers and report identical measures. Since a bill cannot become law until it has been approved in identical form by both Houses of Congress, the committee is often described as "the stage of the legislative process where the nation's laws are often really written" (Allen, & Cochran, 2003: 2761). Manley (1970: 271) describes the action of conference committees as following: „The overriding ethic of the Conference Committee is one of bargaining, give-and-take, compromise, horse-trading, conciliation, and malleability by all concerned [...] compromise is the candid rule of conference committees. Small wonder that each side claims victory, because almost everyone does win - something, somehow, sometime." Nevertheless, studies on conference decision making focus on the question: "Who wins in conference, the House or the Senate?" (cp. Ferejohn, 1975: 1033; Gross, 1980). Those studies focus on the results of the negotiations. For our research question regarding the possibilities of mediatization, the conference decision-making is more relevant. Therefore, we will look on the characteristics, structures and procedures of the Conference Committee. Unfortunately, few research concentrates on the conference decision-making.

This is also the case, because no official records are kept that can shed light on who was included in the committee or how the deliberation processed⁷. Conference action is neither transparent nor open to public. The level of formalization is rather marginal, since there are some rules concerning member formation, the authority of the committee, and conference reports. But the action itself, the deliberative process is unregulated. "Negotiating sessions

⁷ The rules of the House require that one conference meeting be open, unless the House determines by a vote of the yeas and nays that a meeting will be close to public.

range from relatively open to non-existing.” (Allen, & Cochran, 2003: 2762). For example, in the year 1992 conferences on the nation's energy law were held in the Cannon Caucus room in the House of Representatives Office Building. In the year 2003, talks on the energy bill were held in a Capitol hideaway, out of earshot of Democrats or dissenting Republicans (Allen, & Cochran, 2003: 2762). Member formation is regulated in so far, as conferences from both Houses are in the committee. The Senate and the House committees don't need to have the same size but each House has one vote and acts by a majority vote. For this reasons, the number of managers from each House is largely immaterial. Member formation is quite homogeneous and usually a rather small number of actors meet: “The reason for conference committees to be small with just a few members is so that we can work it out and get it done in an expedited manner”, House Majority Leader Tom Delay said (Allen, & Cochran, 2003: 2761). “So those meetings are being held with members who want to get a bill on the floor and to the president.” The need for approval of decisions is relatively high, since both Houses of Congress must approve the bill in identical form. In case they both approve the bill, the decision is obliging. In case there is no agreement, there is an exit option. New conferees may be appointed in either or both Houses.

Altogether the characteristics of conference committees speak for low chances regarding the level of possible mediatization processes in the conference committee. This is particularly the case since the Republicans took control of the House in 1995, which seems to have let to both less transparency and public openness as well as an important role of partisanship.

Exploratory talks following the elections for the German Bundestag

After the elections for the German Bundestag in September 2005 the Red-Green-Coalition, the coalition of the two German political parties SPD (the Social Democratic Party) and Bündnis 90/Die Grünen ("the Greens"), lost their majority in parliament. The conservative alliance of Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and Christian Social Union (CSU) together with the Liberal Party (FDP) did not get the majority either, in contrast to the prognoses of public opinion polls. Both of the two political groups Red-Green and Black (conservative alliance) – Yellow (Liberal Party) did not have an own majority. Despite the missing majority of Red-Green, the chancellor Gerhard Schröder felt himself confirmed in his post and he took the election results as indication that citizens again want a government under his leadership. In contrast, Angela Merkel, chancellor candidate of the conservative alliance, claimed the leadership for herself. Eventually, one month after the elections, on October, 17, coalition negotiation talks for a big coalition with Angela Merkel as chancellor started. What interests us here, is the negotiation process that took place between September, 18 and October, 17. Politicians of both parliamentary parties, Social Democrats and conservative alliance, met in exploratory talks: on September, 22, September, 28, and October, 5. Members were several leading politicians from both parliamentary parties, so there was a huge homogeneity among the actors.

We can find certain mediatization effects on the exploratory talks which result from the likeliness of the talks for implementing media logic. Latter was used strategically to achieve certain objectives. The relatively low degree of formalization in that case gave actors the freedom to do so. So the appearance as well as the degree of mediatization effects is

influenced by the incentives connected to the implementation of media logic into negotiating processes. During the talks, politicians spoke out in public on alternative forms of coalitions or speculations on the ministers of a new government. Politicians of the conservative alliance repeatedly brought the option of a coalition with other parties in to public discussion, in order to put pressure on the Social Democrats. Furthermore, external criticism played a big role. For example there were rumors, that the Social Democrats consider modifications of the by-laws of the German Bundestag: National parties instead of parliamentary parties should be the basis for the declaration of the strongest power in parliament. Strongest party was the Social Democrats Party, not the Christian Democratic Party. This rumor was widely discussed in media and actors of the conservative alliance expressed their opinions disgustedly. The Social Democrats probably wanted to intimidate the conservative alliance, and for that reason the discussion was public. But for public discussion taking another course and conservative politicians venting their anger in media, a front politician of the Social Democrats said in public that the party did not have any modifications of the by-laws in their agenda.

But not only external, also internal criticism was discussed in public. The official speaker on financial topics from the Christian Democrats, who is considered as one of the strongest party-intern opponents of Angela Merkel, was the first front politician of the conservative alliance who said that the alliance did not win the elections. In case of the Social Democratic Party, the governing mayor of Berlin spoke about the possibility of a big coalition without Schröder being chancellor during the time before the initial exploratory talks. His party was disgruntled.

We can conclude that the exploratory talks were dominated by elements of media logic, in contrast to the logic of negotiating institutions. Going (media) public also was a strategic option both for involved and non-involved actors, who wanted an alternative coalition. Thus decisions were made subsequently in talks between very limited numbers of front politicians from both parties. In a circlet, five front politicians met in informal talks to negotiate about the chancellor question, close from public. Here we find clear elements of the logic of negotiating institutions, in contrast to media logics. We find requirements for effective solutions in the modus of negotiations: a small number of actors, very homogeneous actors, no public, no leaks. On October, 10th, party committees of both the conservative alliance and the Social Democrats approve the decision to enter into negotiations for a big coalition, with Angela Merkel as chancellor.

Conclusions from the case studies

Media attention appeared to be an essential, but by far not the sufficient condition for media effects in negotiating institutions. Media attention per se does not need to result in an implementation of media logic of institutions. We found that especially those institutions that apparently are most resistant to mediatization effects are characterized by strong media interest and intense media coverage (cp. table 2). Conclave and conference committee are characterized by negotiating processes that are dominated by the logic of negotiations, despite rather strong media attention. On the other hand, the exploratory talks are characterized by intense media coverage, and at the same time we find the dominance of

media logic in contrast. The Federal Council of Switzerland is sort of between those two types: strong media interest goes align with some implementations of media logic.

The appearance as well as the degree of mediatization effects is influenced by certain characteristics, structures, and procedures of negotiating institutions. Mediating factors are the incentives connected to the implementation of media logic into negotiating processes. So what characteristics foster media effects, and what characteristics in contrast impede the implementation of media logic? We now want to formulate conclusions that are based on the case studies that are discussed previously. But what we have to bear in mind is that this cannot be in form of causations or general connections, since cultural as well as political and social frameworks are to be considered also. We found confirmation for our assumption, that informal networks are more likely to implement media logics than constitutional coercive negotiation. But, the incentives connected to the implementation of media logic into negotiating processes act as mediating factors in that case. So we found a low level of formalization especially for the exploratory talks. That gave political actors the freedom to react strategically and to implement media logics in order to get advantages in the negotiating process. On the other hand, we found a rather low level of formalization for the conference committee as well, but in that case there was no dominance of media logic. That is the case, since political actors would not have any benefits from that, in contrast: The closer to public those negotiations are, the more likely it is that conferees get to their decisions. In case of a high level of formalization the likeliness of media effects is rather low.. That is the case for both Conclave and the Federal Council of Switzerland.

We also found evidence for the assumption, that if there are exit options for actors, the likeliness for mediatization effects is higher than without exit options. Exit options indeed foster the implementation of media logic, as described for both the exploratory talks as well as the Federal Council of Switzerland. Furthermore, we found evidence for the assumption that a relatively high level of public openness and transparency enhances mediatization effects (exploratory talks), whereas a relatively low level of transparency and public openness impede such processes (Conclave). Since we found a rather high homogeneity and a rather small number of actors in all of our case studies, we can not examine the assumptions we made in this respect. Table 4 gives an overview of the connections we found between characteristics of negotiating institutions and the likeliness of mediatization effects. Variables that we found to moderate mediatization effects are shaded grey..

dimensions	influencing factors	Conclave Federal	Council of Switzerland	Conference Committee	Exploratory talks
institution	Level of Formalization	++	++	0	--
	Level of public openness, transparency	--	-	--	++
actors	Exit-option (alternative options of problem)	--	+	0	++

	solving)				
	Homogeneity of actors and number of actors	++	++	++	+

Table 4: Factors influencing the likeliness of mediatization effects of negotiating institutions

Discussion

Most research on mediatization bases on a quantitative perspective on mediatization (cp. Jarren, 2001). The basic assumption is that the expansion of media sector and the more of media products lead to more media coverage and results in a bigger media impact on social actors. In opposition to this causation, we assume, that media attention and media coverage are necessary, but not sufficient conditions for mediatization. As we have shown in the chosen case studies above, high levels of media attention can be found also for institutions which hold strong powers of persistence against mediatization effects. Both Conclave and Swiss Federal Council have developed a couple of procedures to lock up from public. Therefore, we state, that it is unlikely that they become mediatized in the near future. Thus, the likeliness of mediatization effects on Conclave and Swiss Federal Council is comparatively low – in spite of an intense media attention.

Existing research has tended to focus on the impacts of mediatization, rather than on the fundamental institutional preconditions of mediatization at all. So, an oftentimes ploughed field of research faces a less observed topic. This means a desideratum for further research. If the concept of mediatization in future should persist as a central interest of research, mass communication sciences are bound to pay more regard to the preconditions of mediatization.

On the basis of the presented model of influencing factors it is possible to differentiate the global theorem of mediatization, which means a contribution for further research. Moreover, it is possible to derive specific hypotheses implying the concrete institutional, political, and cultural context of the institution, which is in the focus of researchers' interest. That means the reduction of complexity through categories that can be operationalized. On this basis, the global and highly discussable statement that western democracies in all get mediatized, could be differentiated and analyzed.

Moreover, the findings presented in this paper hold implications for the discussion of challenges to political institutions in modern democracies. The results indicate that not all democratic institutions are equally subject to mediatization effects. Rather, mediatization effects are moderated by the complex interaction between media logic and the specific logic of political institutions. Hence, the contradiction that West European democracies are confronted with - which arises from the combination of negotiated and media democracy - can be answered by drawing on factors that might prevent political institutions from getting "mediatized". In other words, not all negotiating institutions are per se challenged by the role media plays in modern democracies. There are institutional characteristics that impede mediatization effects. Such institutional characteristics are a high level of formalization, a low

level of public openness and no exit-options for the political actors involved in the negotiation processes.

Besides possibilities for negotiating institutions to impede media effects, we argue that mediatization effects are not necessarily dysfunctional. In some situations the implementation of media logic might in fact be functional from the perspective of the political actors. That is the case for instance in situations where public statements advance the actors bargaining position or worsen the position of the political opponent.

In general, the findings presented here suggest that mediatization is not a challenge of democratic institutions per se, but fundamentally depends on moderating effects of institutional characteristics. Further research hence has to analyze negotiating processes and media influence in greater detail than we were able to do it in the presented case studies. The cases presented here are used to illustrate our main argument, that institutional characteristics moderate mediatization effects. We will more precisely analyze the role of media for negotiating institutions in the project "The dynamics of political institutions in mediated democracies: Political bargaining and the transformation of the public sphere." In the project we will also pay more attention to the role of context variables as political culture than we were able to do this here. There is more research to do, but the findings presented here indicate that institutional characteristics matter and detailed investigations appear to be very fruitful in order to specify the general assumption of mediatization effects in modern democracies.

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